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Linguistics and Literary Criticism: Shall the Twain Never Meet?

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ABSTRACT: It was a commonplace among traditional linguists and literary scholars that their disciplines were far apart from each other, and that there could be only very little interaction between them. In the late 20-th century, however, the fields of conventional linguistics and traditional literary studies were profoundly unsettled by major paradigm shifts like the decisive turn to text linguistics and discourse analysis, and new trends in literary theory (theoretical criticism). It is against the background of these shifts that the present paper investigates the relationship between modern linguistics (in the guise of text linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, transformational-generative linguistics, semantics, etc.) and literary criticism, both theoretical and practical. By grappling with these two questions – 'Is there a common denominator between linguistics and literary criticism?' and 'Are literary texts fully amenable to a strictly linguistic analysis' -, this article traces the historical development of modern linguistics from conventional linguistics and of literary theory from traditional literary studies, while contrasting conventional linguistics and traditional literary studies, and comparing text linguistics/discourse analysis and literary theory. Ultimately, the paper establishes 'text', 'discourse' and 'language' as commonalities between linguistics and literary criticism, and takes the stance in favour of the irreducibility of literary texts to exclusively linguistic methods and techniques of analysis.

KEYWORDS: Conventional linguistics, discourse, discourse analysis, language, literary theory, modern linguistics, text, text linguistics, traditional literary studies.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is a truism to say that linguistics has conquered the world of other disciplines, probably much faster and more determinedly than any other science. Since its establishment in the early 20th C, modern structural linguistics has had an indescribably intensive contact with other sciences, and linguistic knowledge has been increasingly applied to practical fields ranging from biology, mathematics and computer science to sociology and education (Kambale 2011: 3). As a matter of fact, Ferdinand de Saussure's vision of semiotics has left its imprint on psychoanalysis (Lacan 1966), philosophy (Althusser 1965, Foucault 1966, Derrida 1967) and anthropology (Lévi-Strauss 1949, McQuown 1969), as well as on sociology (Baudrillard 1968) and economics (Baudrillard 1970). As far as education is concerned, modern structural linguistics (Bloomfield 1933) and transformational-generative linguistics (Chomsky 1957) caused a great leap forward in the teaching/learning of foreign languages (Hayes 1969, DeCamp 1969).

Still, some disciplines have continued to shield themselves against and to stage a fierce resistance to the invasion attempts made by linguistics. One such discipline is philology: the curious hostility between philologists and linguists can still be felt on the academic scene where they accused each other of 'pedantry' (Anttila 1975: 145). Another one is literary criticism: some literary critics have, in fact, accused linguistic methods and techniques of being reductionistic in the sense that they tend to overemphasize the 'form' to the detriment of the 'content' and, hence, they break the unity of the two components by absolutizing one of them (Ihwe 1975: 134). Other critics have questioned the linguist's right to analyze literary texts. These specialists of literature have been disturbed by what they felt as the linguist's 'imperialistic intrusion' into

their 'profession' or their 'private business', or as the linguist's attempt to violate the autonomy and relevancy of literary criticism, as a discipline in its own right (Hayes 1969: 199).

This paper aims to address the problem 'linguistics and literary criticism' by grappling with the following two questions: 1) Is there a common denominator between linguistics and literary criticism? 2) Are literary texts fully amenable to a strictly linguistic analysis? These two questions, which echo the above-mentioned denunciation of reductionism and intrusion, are intrinsically related, but, for the sake of convenience, I shall deal with them by turns. But before I tackle them, I shall first sketch a historical development of modern linguistics (text linguistics and discourse analysis) from conventional linguistics, and of literary theory from traditional literary studies. I shall do so by contrasting conventional linguistics and traditional literary studies, and then by comparing text linguistics/discourse analysis and literary theory.

2 LINGUISTICS AND LITERARY CRITICISM: BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

For a very long period of time, roughly from the 1880s to the 1960s, it was tacitly established among linguists and literary scholars that their specific disciplines were distinctive and could not interact much. This disparity is not attributable to mere feelings of mutual rivalry, insecurity, or mistrust, but to the fundamental difference between linguistics and literary studies in their traditional conceptions and directions. De Beaugrande (1993: 423-428) presents and briefly discusses a schematic set of contrasts between conventional linguistics and traditional literary studies which account for the absence of interaction between them in past decades. These contrasts are:

1. While *language*, conceived as an abstract *system*, was the object of linguistics, the *literary text*, apprehended as a concrete *artifact*, constituted the object of literary studies.
2. The linguist used to draw his/her material from *data*, all the samples of language gathered and compared in detail by means of *fieldwork* and *introspection*. The literary scholar, on the contrary, used to derive his/her material from the *canon* of literary texts established mainly by *tradition*.
3. Linguistics adopted a *synchronic* approach to language by viewing it in its current state rather than in its evolution. Literary studies, in contrast, remained determinedly *historical* as the teaching/learning of literature was organized into frames of time periods where contemporary literature was treated at best marginally alongside the canon of 'classics' of the past.
4. The *ideal speaker* who 'knows' the language and can produce an unlimited set of utterances (or sentences) was the operable construct of linguistics, while the *real author* as a biographical and historical figure was the concern of literary studies. Concomitantly, linguistics assumed an *ideal hearer* who is endowed with essentially the same linguistic knowledge as the ideal speaker. In literary studies, however, the *scholar* claimed to be the proper (qualified, discerning, etc.) *reader* for the literary work, and went so far as to present his own reading in the name of the *real author*, thereby merging *author* with *authority*, if not indeed with *authoritarian* posture.
5. Unlike linguistics, which targeted the entire ('homogenous') *community* of speakers, literary studies had, as their widest group of addressees, the *school* or *movement* to which an identifiable set of real authors could be assigned by conspicuous stylistic or thematic attributes.
6. Linguistics sought to formulate the most *general* principles, with a particular emphasis on generalizations applying to an entire language or, better still, to all languages ('universals'). Literary studies, on the contrary, accorded much attention to the *special* or even *unique* quality of the literary work.
7. Whereas linguistics addressed the *rules of language* encoding the patterns, usually formal, which apply to all or most instances, literary studies addressed the *conventions of genre*, some of which are based on form and others on theme or topic.
8. In linguistics, *style* was studied as *choice*, i.e. the selection of certain options offered by the overall language system. In literary studies, however, *style* was perceived as *ornamentation*, i.e. an aesthetically pleasing addition of 'schemes' and 'tropes' existing independently of the 'content' or 'message' of the work.
9. Linguistics resolved to be *non-evaluative* in that it recorded and described language irrespective of prescriptive and proscriptive attitudes about 'good' and 'bad' or 'correct' and 'incorrect'. Literary studies, on the other hand, remained *evaluative*, in spite of occasional acknowledgements of the obscuring and distortive tendency of values.
10. The goal of linguistics was the *description* of a *whole language* as a total system, a characterization of its phonological, morphological and grammatical regularities in compact and perspicuous format. In contrast, the goal of literary studies

was to a large extent the *advocacy of one's interpretation* of a particular work and, in conjunction, of the work itself as a meritorious exemplar worthy of such explication.

11. Statements and claims in linguistics were *confirmed by data* as additional samples were collected and compared to a given formulation. In literary studies, the implicit standard for confirming an interpretation was the *eloquence* of the scholar in persuading, convincing and creating harmony and order.

12. Prospective linguists underwent *training by method*, the most noteworthy being the technique for eliciting, recording and analyzing data by fieldwork. Prospective literary scholars, on the contrary, were *trained by imitating* the interpretive performances of established scholars, including their teachers, upon concrete works.

13. While linguistics was characterized by *collective research* among teams and each contributor sought to expand or stipulate the accumulating model (or 'grammar'), literary studies were devoted to *individual research*, and each contributor wanted to shine the most among his peers by overturning previous interpretations of the same work.

14. Although linguistics has gleaned enormous practical achievements in descriptive fieldwork, it has had a reputation for being *theory-centered*. Literary studies, though steadily influenced by such disciplines as philosophy, aesthetics and history of ideas, have had a reputation for being *practice-centered*. That is, they were based firmly on the activities of reading and interpreting rather than on the formulation of abstract principles.

It flows from the above contrastive sets that traditional linguistics systematically studied language as a whole, thus covering all aspects and uses of language, as well as all styles (Robins 1973: 336). Yet, its central interest was 'every day' or 'normal' texts[1] about which it made statements along the lines of the complementary concepts of 'structure', i.e. the constructional elements of texts and the regularities of their arrangement, and 'function', or the occurrence and use of texts within a speech community (Ihwe 1975: 131). As to traditional literary studies, they consisted in making pronouncements or judgments about literary works in a way to assess their specific 'value' in 'literature', their 'canonizability', and to categorize them and their authors into established schools or movements. As such, they were solely concerned with a particular genre of language use or production: canonical literary texts or those texts whose properties make them fall into the category of 'canonical literature', and which characteristically comprise a certain number of peculiar ('unordinary', 'deviant', etc.) uses and styles.

Traditional linguistics and traditional literary studies were thus antipodes, but their conventional grounds of opposition gave way to an auspicious scenario for a fundamental reconciliation as a result of the major paradigm shifts that profoundly unsettled the conventions on both sides from the 1970-80s onward. On the side of linguistics, pressure from problems inherent in 'non-textual' ('sentence') linguistics resulted in a decisive turn toward text linguistics and discourse analysis. The former focuses more on 'written discourse' and the latter on 'spoken texts', but both are concerned with text organizations. Richards, Platt and Weber (1985: 84 and 292) highlight the closeness of the two branches of linguistics in these terms:

> *Discourse analysis is the study of how sentences in spoken and written language form larger meaningful units such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, etc. (…). Some linguists use the term text linguistics for the study of written discourse. [Text linguistics] studies spoken or written texts, e.g. a descriptive passage, a scene in a play, a conversation. It is concerned, for instance, with the way the parts of a text are organized and related to one another in order to form a meaningful whole. Some linguists prefer to include the study of all spoken texts, particularly if they are longer than one sentence, under discourse analysis.*

As to the side of literary studies, primacy was accorded to literary theory which shifted the concern from the individual text to the general conditions of literature or 'literariness'. De Beaugrande (1993: 429-434) draws a number of parallels between the trends in text linguistics/discourse analysis and literary theory. Here, I shall sketch only eight of them which I deem as major ones:

1. In discourse analysis, a strong stress is put equally on the social and cognitive aspects of *text* and *discourse*. In literary theory, however, the social aspects are emphasized only by politically left-wing scholars, and the cognitive ones mainly by those whose conceptual perspective is phenomenology, gestalt theory and sociology of knowledge.

[1] *The expression 'text' refers here to all linguistic entities that are part and parcel of language use. In this sense, a 'text' has an all-inclusive scope, from a simple interjection to a complex opus with several volumes.*

2. While the scope of text linguistics is, in theory, all-encompassing in that it is concerned with *all* text types, the scope of literary theory has remained *selective*, in spite of the attempts to transcend the traditional 'canon'.
3. Data about text production and text reception have a critical importance, and the techniques of data collection are both empirical and diversified in text linguistics and discourse analysis. In literary theory, on the contrary, data are still mainly speculative, and data-gathering techniques are comfortably established inside literary institutions.
4. The orientation of text linguistics/discourse analysis is *dynamic* and *procedural*, while the orientation of literary theory is *programmatic*. That is, literary theory views literature as a complex of projects for navigating the complexities of literary communication (de Beaugrande 1993: 438). The dynamic nature of the programmatic approaches adopted in literary theory draws it closer to text linguistics/discourse analysis, although their procedurality is questionable.
5. In text linguistics/discourse analysis, text and discourse have as their addressee the *community as a social complex* of different classes and groups among whom the distribution of power and solidarity is unequal within the 'prevailing order'. In literary theory, far from being ensconced in schools or movements, authors and works are placed in a *horizon*, i.e. against the background of the cultural meanings within which literary production took place (Eagleton 1996: 72). In this light, the concept of *community as social complex* has some logical connection with the concept of *horizon* in the sense that literary expectations exist among a substratum of that complex.
6. Text linguistics sets a careful *balance* between a *general* outlook (whole language) and a *specific* one (specific data/single text). That is, text linguists do not easily consider their data as a representative sample of the whole language, nor do they regard them as less valuable, informative, or 'scientific' altogether. As to literary theory, it favours a *dialectic between innovation and expectation* whereby the specific achievement of a single work is seen in terms of how it skillfully modifies prior systems of shaping and sense-making. Against this background, there is a partial compatibility between the *balance of general and specific* in text linguistics and the *balance of innovation vs. expectation* in literary theory. Text linguistics is concerned with a broad range of intermediary constructs between the whole language and the single text, and these constructs constitute the framework within which anything may be more or less innovative or expected in literature.
7. Text linguistics does not rely on an algorithmic rule to apply invariably to all data and in all situations. Rather, it operates with a *strategy*, i.e. a procedural *interactive heuristic* which has sufficient flexibility and power as to take due care of the peculiarity or novelty of each situation in which it manages topics and goals, and, hence, to handle many contexts and needs. Likewise, literary theory affirms the *instability of genre* and the *diversity of style*. As such, it praises as 'valid' a work which does not merely conform to its genre, but modifies it and even cuts across genres. It also credits with a 'distinctive' identity a style (i.e. *mode of literary discursivity*) which maintains the dialectic between innovation and expectation. In this light, text linguistics and literary theory are quite proximate in the sense that the linguistic concept of *strategy as heuristic* is likely to be of some help in the evaluation of the *instability of genre* and the *diversity of style* in literature.
8. In discourse analysis, discourse is *evaluated by interactional criteria*, such as *efficiency*, *effectiveness* and *appropriateness*, which are not normative or rule-enforcing, but must be demonstrably relevant to the success of communicative events. Similarly, in literary theory, a text does not have a stable value: the reader may appraise it differently every time s/he engages with it, and this *engagement* also has a *transient value*. As de Beaugrande (1993: 443) observes, the fact that literary theory encourages readers to be self-reliant

> *would constitute one application to discursive practices that would also support an advocacy for a literary model of communication as the development and enrichment of the self and the imagination. This would clearly constitute confirmation both by social relevance and by increased insight.*

The parallels between text linguistics/discourse analysis and literary theory highlighted above show a rapprochement, or a marked progress towards the bridging of the incommensurable gulf of stark contrasts that existed between traditional linguistics and traditional literary studies. Against the background of this rapprochement stand a number of differences which flow from the individuality, or idiosyncrasy, of each discipline as an autonomous entity. Rather than acting like 'iron curtains' which intensify paranoia and worsen hostilities, these differences are considerably open borders which encourage mutual acceptance, mutual respect and partnership among the practitioners of text linguistics/discourse analysis and literary theory.

Now that this rapprochement has been firmly established, the next step is to address directly the first question: *Is there a common denominator between linguistics and literary criticism*? Before so, it is worth bringing to light the fact that linguistics refers here to 'modern' linguistics in the guise of text linguistics and discourse analysis, as discussed in parallel with literary theory, and even of transformational-generative linguistics, semantics and pragmatics. And literary criticism should be

understood as the umbrella term for studies that are concerned with the definition, classification, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of works of literature. As such, literary criticism has two mutually inclusive and dependent components: a theoretical component (theoretical criticism or literary theory) and a practical one (practical or applied criticism). In the words of Abrams (1999: 50),

> *Theoretical criticism proposes an explicit theory of literature, in the sense of general principles, together with a set of terms, distinctions, and categories, to be applied to identifying and analyzing works of literature, as well as the criteria (the standards, or norms) by which these works and their writers have to be evaluated […]. Practical criticism, or applied criticism, [however], concerns itself with the discussion of particular works and writers; in an applied critique, the theoretical principles controlling the mode of the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation are often left implicit, or brought in only as the occasion demands.*

With this precision in mind and taking on board the parallel sets outlined above, it is obvious that linguistics is wider in scope than literary criticism: since not all texts are considered as 'literary', the field of linguistics encompasses the uses of language that are much larger than those of a purely 'literary' nature. On the other hand, the criticism of a literary phenomenon is a matter of analyses that transcend the study of texts from a strictly linguistic perspective. Thus, the domains of linguistics and literary criticism do not coincide strictly, but they have common denominators – text and discourse which are accepted as central entities on both sides, although these terms have a wide range of interpretation (de Beaugrande 1993: 441). It is on the ground of these common denominators that linguistic theories, methods and techniques have been informing the theory and practice of criticism in literature since the late 1970s. Structuralist literary critics, for instance, have espoused Saussure's concepts and language analysis procedures as a model for analyzing the forms and organization of large-scale literary structures, and some of them analyze literary texts from the 'pragmatic' perspective, i.e. as systematic plays of codes which effect the interpretive responses of the reader. Likewise, stylisticians and Russian formalists have applied Continental and American linguistics to the analysis of distinctive uses of language in literary texts (Abrams 1999: 141). Discourse analysis has also been helpful in the examination of *dialogue* in novels, short-stories and plays: the chief aim of its application has been the explanation of how characters in a literary work, and readers alike, are constantly able to infer meanings that are not asserted or specified in a conversational exchange. This increasing and enduring commitment of critics with linguistics shows, among other things, that precise knowledge of the mechanisms that regulate the language of a text is of paramount importance in the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of that text (Gary-Prieur 1985: 13-14).

Indeed, language, the 'medium' or 'vehicle' of literature (Griffith 1982: 10), takes on particular importance in all literary texts. This importance varies from genre to genre. Robins (1973: 336-337) gives the example of European literature in which poetry and oratory prose depend more on the linguistic material out of which they are composed than narratives and stories in prose. In poetry, too, lyrical poetry depends much more on language itself than dramatic poetry does. There are also literary texts which owe their specificity and their aesthetic value to the peculiar or unordinary forms of language used in them. Far from being the private property of literary critics, these works constitute an important corpus of specific data that linguists can use for the study of a given language, or, more generally, for the study of the use that human beings make of language.

Additionally, there are texts that pose some linguistic problems. As a matter of fact, for old texts (by Chaucer, for example), the language is simply an obstacle to reading, and in order to read these texts, one has to 'learn' the form of English in which they are written as a foreign language. Fortunately, such texts have already been 'translated' into modern English to make them accessible to a wide readership. But even modern English texts have their own share of language-related problems, such as the change in the meaning of a word over time or the acceptability of this or that construction. Therefore, for an in-depth study of a given 'text', it is mandatory that the knowledge of the structural and functional behavior of the language (in which that text is written) be coupled with the knowledge of its historical development.

It is on the basis of the importance of language in literature that no critic can satisfactorily study a literary text without paying due attention to its medium, language (Hayes 1969: 198), in the same way as no one can study music without knowing harmony, or painting without knowing the physics of colours (Gary-Prieur 1985: 12). Also, it is on this basis that the linguist has the right to make literary judgments. It is undeniable that one part of the 'aesthetic appreciation' of literature, whether it concerns the entire production of an author, or just a particular text, written or spoken, lies on the specific use of the linguistic material at the phonetic, morphosyntactic and lexical levels. Therefore, the application of the tools of linguistic science to the study of literary texts can prove useful at the specific stage of 'language evaluation'.

Now that I have, hopefully, addressed the question about whether or not linguistics and literary criticism have a common ground, it appears that linguistics and literary criticism simply cannot be like East and West, the twain that shall never meet, according to a famed ballad by Kipling. Their disciplinary connection is undeniable, and the reinforcement of this rapprochement is one of the undying concerns of not only some literary critics (deconstructionists, Russian formalists,

semioticians, structuralists and stylisticians), but also of some linguists at both collective and individual levels. In fact, the Ninth International Congress of Linguists discussed, for the first time in the history of such important cultivated conferences, the connection between linguistic stylistics and poetics (Hayes 1969: 197). Also, influential scholars, such as Roman Jakobson, Morris Halle and Archibald Hill, have endeavoured to study literary texts along the lines of the methods of linguistics, and some have suggested that criticism depends first upon detailed analysis.

Roman Jakobson strongly believed that it was as much anachronistic for linguists to exclude or distance from their field of investigation the poetic or literary text, as for literary critics to refuse to resort to linguistic tools in their analysis. As far as Jakobson's personal case is concerned, Faye et al. (1972: 48-49) report, it is *poetics* (literature) that led him to *linguistics*: at school, he was very much interested in poetry, and he used to think of specializing in literary history. But soon he realized that his questions touching on the analysis of literary works - for example the question about the grammar of poetic language - were likely to get answers only from a linguistic perspective. Jakobson later presented his contributions to the explication and analysis of literary texts along the lines of linguistic methods in his 1960 famous essay "Linguistics and Poetics", and in his now-classic book *Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*.

Linguist Morris Halle, Jakobson's student and disciple, soon followed suit. As a pioneer of generative phonology, he was the first to be interested in and to discuss the relative similitude between the study of metrics (poetics) and the study of phonology (linguistics). And he published remarkable essays on Chaucer, on metrics, and on iambic verses. As Faye et al. (1972: 58) report, the conjoint works of Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser in generative phonology have found a fertile ground of application in poetics, and more especially in prosody.

As to Archibald Hill, in his now-acclaimed articles "Analysis of *The Windhover*: An Experiment in Structural Method" and "Some Points in the Analysis of Keats' *Grecian Urn*", he attempted to move from linguistic analysis to literary criticism without, however, making any overt distinction between them. In commenting upon one of his studies, Hayes (1969: 199) reports, Hill said:

> *I do not know, and do not much care, whether the method I have followed is linguistic or literary. There is a reason for my indifference. I think of the two disciplines as one, and I do not believe that it is impossible to carry on both, either successively or at the same time.*

Hill's bold and worrisome indifference calls to mind the second question: *Are literary texts fully amenable to a strictly linguistic analysis?* This question is so complex that it cannot be answered straight out. Two important considerations will capture this complexity, and pave the way to an unequivocal answer. The first consideration is that since linguistics aims to attain scientific, objective knowledge, its investigation method is purely analytical. The linguist thus reduces a 'text' to a tissue of relations or to elements that relate to one another following the laws of association. From this perspective, a 'text' is just the sum total of elements that the linguist is tasked with enumerating and delineating precisely. After the 'text' writer has achieved a synthesis in their own way, it is now the business of the linguist to generate an analytic or a structural knowledge of this whole by breaking it down into its constituent parts. It is problematic to apply this way the insights of structural linguistics to complex literary works. While transformational-generative linguistics, for example, can elucidate deep structures, it cannot account for literary effects which are often achieved by highly individual means. Also, generative grammars of narrative have difficulty providing much insight into works more elaborate than folktales or detective stories (Damrosch 2003: 518-519).

The second consideration is that a 'literary text' is not just any text: it is a 'work of art' *sui generis* like a painting or a sculpture. Therefore, contrary to what Ihwe (1975: 133) claims, not all the properties that make a given 'text' into an instance of 'literature' are describable in solely linguistic terms. As a work of art, a 'literary text' is not composed according to the laws of analytic thought, i.e. by summing elements, and, hence, it is not pliable to a reader's perception through a step-by-step revelation of its parts (Piguet 1967: 114). It is as much counterproductive to 'appraise' a painting, or a sculpture, by considering *first* its colours and lines, *then* its structures and, *finally*, its aesthetic values, as to 'appreciate' a poem by moving successively from the lexical units and phrasal categories that make up each verse to their grammatical functions and the semantic relationships between them. Of course, structure-oriented analysts will ask pointedly: Why is it so? Well, the reason is that, as an artifact, a 'literary text' is a whole that has precedence over its parts. To borrow a metaphor from Schopenhauer, a literary text is a large diamond which, cut up into little bits, will entirely lose the value it had as a whole; or an army which, when divided up into small bodies of soldiers, loses all its strength. A literary text enjoys some kind of irreducible wholeness, some kind of unity that exists even before the distinction between 'signifier' and 'signified'. This unity challenges all sorts of linguistic dissociations, and calls for a *Gestalt approach*, or an approach that counterbalances systemization and close attention to details: we need to see both the forest and the trees.

It is deducible from the above premises, or considerations, that 'literary texts' cannot be fully amenable to a strictly linguistic analysis. This analysis tries hard to decompose a 'literary text', which is an artistic phenomenon, and, by so doing, it collides time and again with indecomposable units of meaning. Every 'literary text', just like every work of art, is made up of global units of meaning that can be perceived by an 'artistic mind', but that cannot be rendered adequately by an 'analytic mind' (Piguet 1967: 114). For this reason, these global units of meaning are impassable obstacles to a purely analytic study of literary texts. If a 'literary text', as a work of art, is characterized by 'internal totality', or the union of the 'word' and the 'thing', then it cannot be decomposed analytically without ceasing to exist altogether. That is why both pure analysts (who neglect this 'unity' by decomposing 'literary texts' into their constituents) and formalists (who view 'literary texts' as associations of formal elements) have been accused of committing a crime known as 'reductionism'.

Linguists will not hear anything to do with this accusation, though. To them it is a 'story' completely made up by literature essentialists to establish the categorial particularity of literature by the 'non-linguistic side' of texts and, hence, to justify the divorce between 'literary texts' and the analytical methods of linguistics. On the one hand, they averred that the paradigm shifts that occurred in linguistics over time make it possible to 'analyze' the 'content' in terms of the 'linguistic side' of texts. As Ihwe (1975: 134) observes, this kind of analysis

> *is already true in principle for so-called 'Russian Formalism' in a later phase of its development […]. Today the accent in linguistics lies more on the question of what role semantics should play and what form of semantics is needed in a fully formalized grammar theory […]. There are first attempts to come to a unitary theory on the basis of results established from the theory of 'narrative' structures, a point arguing for the extension of contemporary theories of grammar and thus also of the linguistic concept of structure.*

On the other hand, linguists dismissed literary critics' pronouncements as being 'too vague and too imprecise to be of much value' (Hayes 1969: 198), and moved on to affirm in earnest that, with just a little adjustment of the general categories along the lines of which 'ordinary texts' are described, 'literary texts' also fall entirely within the compass of their enquiry. And, all the more so, literary theory or criticism is basically an appendage of linguistics that preserves some independence solely because of a special refinement of the techniques of description (Ihwe 1975: 137). This is also a line of reasoning one finds in Jakobson's (1960) essay 'Linguistics and Poetics' and in his remarks concluding the Ninth International Congress of Linguists: 'The study of poetry [is] inseparable from linguistics and [is] its pertinent task'[2] (Hayes 1969: 197).

This view, however, fails to take into account this fundamental difference between linguistic analysis and literary criticism: the primary interest of linguistic analysis is empirical data, while the chief concern of literary criticism is value. And, as David Lodge (1960) quite rightly observed in his book *Language of Fiction*, values are not amenable to scientific method. Linguistic analysis is thus too 'descriptive' and 'objectifying' to be sensitive to the 'aesthetic appeal' of 'literary texts', and, when solely applied too strictly, its methods can destroy or seriously impair the 'beauty' of such texts. Analysts cast a scientific look at a 'literary text', i.e. they consider it simply as an 'object'. As such, they study it 'objectively' to reach its meaning. Critics, however, go beyond as to view it in terms of the expression of a 'subjective' experience and, hence, as a 'reality'. This literary reality is made up of a system of signs which is characterized, from the outset, by an irreducible unity. It is a fact of the mind that comprises both the being of the creator (poet, novelist or playwright) and a literary language intermediating between this creator and his/her universe. The fundamental relation of this system of meaning covers extremely complex phenomena that can be perceived directly and from within (literary criticism perspective) or approached from without by using a method (linguistic analysis perspective) that tries to account for objects of art (Piguet 1967: 120).

This distinctness does not mean that linguistics and literary criticism are poles apart from each other, and that linguists do not, therefore, have the right to make literary judgments. It rather means that there can never be between them any relation of *substitution*, but only that of *complementarity*, i.e. a mutually enriching connection based on an uncondescending exchange of ideas. Actually, a constant interpenetration of analysis and criticism is somehow unavoidable, especially when the critic's point of departure is the study of the language of a 'literary text'. On the one hand, a holistic assessment of a 'literary text' cannot overlook its 'style', and the study of style inevitably passes by the consideration of the general means of expression common to all speakers of the language in which that text is written. On the other hand, a linguist's attempt to an inventory of different stylistic traits specific to a given code (language) simply cannot overlook individual styles as they are

[2] *Frye rebels against such an 'imperialistic' view in his Anatomy of Criticism (1957), where he argues that literary criticism should draw directly from literature the necessary instruments of analysis, and that it should be free from the dependence on other disciplines such as philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, etc.*

displayed in 'literary texts'. More importantly, since artistic awareness is perceptive in nature, a better understanding and appreciation of 'literary texts' calls for the critic's inner aesthetic perception to be coupled with adequate discursive knowledge following the laws of this perception, and not those of the speech made about it (Piguet 1967: 115). This entails that it is necessary for the critic to be trained not only in the study of literature as art, but also in that of language. As to the language scientist, a radical refinement and adjustment of their methods is needed for literary texts to fall within the realm of their study. Radicalism means here that, in addition to their being conversant with literary aesthetics, the linguist should subordinate their analytic and descriptive methods to the laws of artistic perceptiveness and sensitiveness as required by literary texts.

3 CONCLUSION

Linguistics and literary criticism are two disciplines whose definitively established borders cannot be blurred. There are three main reasons for this impossibility. The first is orientational: linguistics has a scientific orientation and, as such, it is primarily interested in objective, verifiable data. As to literary criticism, in spite of the wish and enterprise of scholars like Frye and Hirsch to establish it as a 'science', it remains more artistic than empirical and systematic. In this regard, literary criticism always takes an aesthetic orientation and is, therefore, chiefly concerned with value.

The second reason is methodological: since linguistics is scientific in nature, its method is strictly 'analytical' and 'descriptive'. It is typical of a linguist to proceed by breaking a whole down into its components and to move from the outside (structure-function) of a text into its inside (content), by leaning on the former and paying more attention to language. On the contrary, the method of literary criticism is essentially 'perceptive', 'intuitive' and 'evaluative'. A critic attempts to perceive a text in its irreducible artistic wholeness. Since his/her focal point is the inside of texts, the critic listens more to the voice of the artist (writer).

The last reason, which is teleological, is that linguistics, as a scientific investigation, aims at drawing from the study of texts a set of workable, abstract principles or of sufficiently generalizable results about language behaviour and use. Likewise, literary criticism is a rigorous inquiry that intends to lay out an *organon* of methods (Wellek and Warren 1987: 19), i.e. a set of universal terms, general principles and criteria for the evaluation of literary texts. However, it also seeks to uncover the individual characteristics of each text in terms of the aspects of existential experience that underlie it, its quality or value, as well as the formal and stylistic choices made by its author.

The impossibility of border blurring does not, however, imply that no interdisciplinary connection can take place. In fact, a fruitful exchange of findings and perceptive observations should be encouraged because linguistics and literary criticism are contiguous disciplines that converge on the understanding of language, texts and discourses. On the one hand, since language is the vehicle of literature and the object of linguistics, the linguist has the right to make literary judgments. Furthermore, the methods of linguistics can be of help at some stages in the analysis of literary texts. On the other hand, the procedures of literary criticism can inform the practice of the linguistic analysis of texts. In the light of this complementarity, any contretemps between linguists and critics as to the germaneness of each other's specific contributions is intolerable. It is beneficial to both to adopt this philosophical attitude which consists in listening to and learning from each other for self and mutual enrichment, and in seeking the unification of apparent irreconcilables.

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